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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 000697

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: TURKEY: AMBASSADOR MEETS PRO-PKK DTP LEADER

REF: ANKARA 696

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Jeffrey for reasons 1.4(b,d)

¶1. (C) Summary: In a May 13 meeting with Ambassador, pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) leader Ahmet Turk said DTP is pursuing dialogue to achieve Kurds' main demands: the ability to use freely their mother tongue, express their Kurdish identity and culture, and participate in local government decisions through a more decentralized government system. Turk claimed the PKK and its jailed leader Abdullah Ocalan have reached a point where they favor dialogue over armed struggle. He blamed interference by the military and state elites for the GOT's inability to introduce a credible, comprehensive plan to resolve the Kurdish problem. Ambassador told Turk emphatically that with guns no progress is possible. He called on DTP to leverage its electoral success in March local elections to achieve political traction on the Kurdish issue. End summary.

¶2. (C) Ambassador paid a courtesy call visit on DTP Chairman Ahmet Turk on May 13 at Turk's Parliament office. This was Ambassador's first tete-a-tete with Turk, though they had met previously during President Obama's visit to Ankara. In attendance were DTP's Deputy Chair for International Relations Sebahat Tuncel and Turk's foreign affairs advisor Sinan Onal. The Ambassador was accompanied by poloff and polfsn.

¶3. (C) Turk told Ambassador that DTP supports resolving the Kurdish issue through dialogue. Kurds in Turkey have several "reasonable requests." They want a democratic Turkey where they can freely use their mother tongue, the right to express their identity and culture, and the ability to participate in local government decisions through a decentralized government system that DTP calls "democratic autonomy." Turk said the PKK and its jailed leader Ocalan have reached a point where they believe arms should be silenced and dialogue pursued. This creates an opening, he said, for resolution of the Kurdish issue and an end to bloodshed.

¶4. (C) The Turkish state is preventing any progress, according to Turk. He argued that the Turkish military and state bureaucratic elites still control Turkish politics, and that these power brokers do not want to see a resolution of the Kurdish issue. They view the democratically-elected DTP as an extension of the PKK and have, in effect, "shut the door" on such reasonable requests under the premise that democratization overtures would undermine the fight against

terrorism. Turk said the GOT has failed to introduce a credible overall plan to resolve the Kurdish issue. The GOT has taken limited steps, such as opening the state-run Kurdish language Shesh TV, but then took contrary actions by allowing the arrests of hundreds of DTP members and by failing to stop hundreds of continuing court cases against individuals who spoke in Kurdish. Turk maintained that the state's continuing failure to introduce a legitimate project to resolve the Kurdish issue should engender more international criticism. He appealed to the Ambassador for the US to encourage the Turkish government and state actors to accommodate the "legitimate and reasonable" requests of Turkey's Kurds.

15. (C) Ambassador told Turk emphatically that with guns there can be no progress. The US respects Turkey's democratic system and therefore President Obama had called on the leaders of all major opposition parties, including DTP. But we strongly disagree with DTP's position concerning the PKK. As President Obama said during his speech to Turkish Parliament, we view the PKK as purely a terrorist organization. Nothing justifies terror and nothing justifies a parliamentary party justifying violence against the very state of which it is a part.

16. (C) The USG will lend its support to a peaceful resolution of the Kurdish issue, and continues to urge the GOT and TGS to engage in a comprehensive solution, Ambassador told Turk. But resolving the Kurdish issue ultimately is a task for Turkey, not the US or international community. DTP achieved great electoral success in the Southeast in March local

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elections, and should now use its political power wisely to further dialogue and work toward peaceful solutions. Turkey has taken significant steps on this issue. DTP should participate within the political system to achieve further progress.

17. (C) Comment: DTP is key to any resolution of the Kurdish issue. Although the party was democratically elected to Parliament, it has been shunned by PM Erdogan and the main opposition parties, who (not incorrectly) regard it as the political arm of the PKK. The party also still faces a Constitutional Court closure case, and its members remain under tremendous judicial pressure. The DTP has not helped raise its legitimacy by sending mixed messages about the PKK, simultaneously calling for an end to violence while defending the PKK's "legitimacy." Ambassador's tete-a-tete with Ahmet Turk both signalled support for the party's democratic role and support among Kurds and allowed us to impress upon Turk the need for DTP to play a constructive political role following its electoral success. The meeting comes at an opportune time for progress on the Kurdish issue (reftel). That progress will depend in large part on the Turk's willingness to take on board the Ambassador's message and his ability to impress upon the PKK the futility of continuing its armed struggle.

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